

knew, the President's staff knew, that the bill actually cost \$530 billion.

So what did they do? They suppressed it. In a nutshell, the President's gag order worked, the bill passed, and the President signed it. And do my colleagues know what we got? Seniors got a 17 percent increase in their premiums, the largest increase ever inflicted on America's senior population, simply because the President of the United States did not tell the truth when he signed that bill and when he lobbied Congress for that bill.

Importation is another example of the Bush disinformation strategy. The drug industry has no better friend than President Bush. Of course they do not. The drug industry has given President Bush \$30 million for his reelection, has given millions of dollars to my friends on the other side of the aisle. Of course President Bush will do the drug industry's bidding. That is why we ended up with a 17 percent increase, the largest premium increase ever inflicted on America's seniors.

Dodging responsibility is the third play in the Bush administration's health policy playbook. The best example is a 17 percent increase. The President announced the 17 percent increase on Friday afternoon before Labor Day. The press had gone home, people had turned their TV sets off if they were watching any of these announcements, and the President thought nobody would notice. Well, people certainly noticed. But the President then said, because people did notice, he said, it is not really my fault. I was the hapless victim, he said, of a formula written into the law.

It happened to be the law that he pushed through Congress and that he signed, the Medicare law. That is like stomping on the gas pedal and blaming the engine for getting a speeding ticket.

President Bush championed the Medicare bill. He twisted arms. We remember in this Chamber, my friends on the other side of the aisle remember this, we had a 3-hour vote starting at 3 in the morning, and it took until 6 in the morning. One Member was bribed on the House floor. Member after Member after Member had his arm twisted, her arm twisted, yet the President says it is not my fault that we had this 17 percent premium increase.

The fact is, the President is responsible for that 17 percent premium increase, and the President needed to get that increase so that the insurance companies and the drug companies could get their money out of the bill.

So basically what happened is the money is taken out of seniors' pockets; that is why we have this record 17 percent premium increase for every one of America's seniors. The money is taken out of the pockets of seniors; and then that money is taken together, billions of dollars, and put into the coffers of the drug companies and the insurance companies, direct subsidies for the drug companies, increased profits to

the insurance companies, and then it comes full circle, and those companies then put millions of dollars in President Bush's campaign, in Majority Leader DELAY's campaign, in the campaigns of Republican leadership in the House, in the other body, and for the President of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, it is scandalous that seniors are inflicted with a 17 percent, a record increase in premiums so that George Bush could have his campaign funded by the drug companies and funded by the insurance companies. It is wrong. They should be ashamed.

#### DROUGHT RELIEF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to indulge in a little change of pace here. This is an issue that is completely nonpartisan, which, hopefully, my friends on the other side will appreciate.

What we are looking at here is a drought map. As most people know, Florida has been hit by two hurricanes recently, and we have a third one that may hit them and may hit Alabama. This is an unbelievable set of circumstances.

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The Congress quickly sent \$2 billion in relief to Florida which is certainly appropriate, and we have a request for another \$3 billion.

What I would like to do is to call attention to another disaster which has occurred and this is the drought. This is the drought monitor map which was drawn up in 2002, and you can see that the eastern seaboard had considerable drought. Most all of the western States were badly impacted. We will take another look now, 2 years later and we see a very similar picture. The eastern seaboard is certainly improved but most of the West is still gripped by a drought that is one of the worst in history, and that has been going on now for 5 years.

So what has happened is that any dry land crops in these areas in here have been relatively nonexistent now for 5 years. And so these farmers' equity has been eaten up to the point where many of them now are being driven off the land. Many of their ranchers have had their pastures destroyed, sometimes for 4, 5 years in a row. We have had some livestock feed assistance which has been very helpful, but, again, some of them have had to sell some of their herd, some have had to sell all of their herd, and some have been driven out of business.

The other thing that is pretty dire at this point is that most of the reservoirs in the West are anywhere from 15 to 25 percent full which means the irrigators have been receiving half, some of them none of their water for the last couple of years. And in most of these res-

ervoirs they will simply run out of water in the next couple of years. So it is a very difficult situation. And many have said, well, a drought is not quite like a hurricane. It is not quite like a fire. It is not quite like a flood or a tornado because those things come very quickly but a drought takes time to develop and, therefore, you have time to adjust and, therefore, we really should not give any emergency aid for this type of activity that we see on this map.

But actually if you plant your crop in May and you do not get any rain for the next 3 or 4 weeks you do not have a crop. Now 2 or 3 or 4 weeks is pretty quick, so many of these people have been suffering from a drought that has not been of their own doing and has certainly come on relatively quickly.

I would like to call attention to one other chart here. Many people have said, well, it is unreasonable to ask for any drought assistance with this situation here because of the slowness of the oncoming of the drought. The thing that I would like to call attention here is what has happened with the farm bill. The farm bill was supposed to cost roughly \$50 billion over the first 3 years of its existence, and we can see that in 2002 the projected cost was \$14.3 billion. Actually it cost \$13.2 billion. In 2003, a year ago it was supposed to cost 18.6. It actually cost 12.1, and the projection for this year which we are about through the fiscal year was \$17.5, and the actual cost will be about 10.1. So what this means is the projected cost was to be \$50 billion. In actuality it will be about \$35 billion. So this is one of the few government programs that I know of where the cost is considerably less than what it was supposed to cost.

And so you say, where did that \$15 billion come from? What happened here? Well, part of it is the drought. And here is the logic. The drought has reduced production. When you have reduced production it causes prices to go up. When prices go up, you have fewer farm payments because you have no LDP's. You have no countercyclical payment. So much of this \$15 billion difference is due to the drought. And so my suggestion is that Congress think about this a little bit as we think about Florida, and we should, as we think about wildfires, and we should. Let us think a little bit about what is going on in the West, those 6 or 7 or 8 western states which have been hit so hard.

It is my understanding that the other body has acted this evening and have appropriated or have added on roughly \$2.9 billion for the drought. I am hopeful that this body that the House will follow suit and will consider this.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to call my colleagues' attention to the situation that we think is fairly serious in the western part of the United States and something that has been ongoing for the last 5 years.